

## Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

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FM AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4646

INFO AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE KUALA LUMPUR 5458

JAKARTA FOR REGIONAL LABOR OFFICER

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, PINT, MY

SUBJECT: IBRAHIM ALI REPORT CONTROVERSY CONTINUES

REF: (A) KUALA LUMPUR 5155, (B) KUALA LUMPUR 4611

1. SUMMARY. THE IBRAHIM ALI REPORT DISPUTE CONTINUES TO BUBBLE AONG, OCCUPYING A GROWING SHARE OF PUBLIC ATTENTION. IN THE PAST WEEK FOR THE FIRST TIME THE PRESS, IN WHAT IS PROBABLY A SUBTLE GOM WARNING, NOTED THE POWER OF THE GOVERNMENT TO PREVENT STRIKES BY PUBLIC SECTOR EMPLOYEES. PRIME MINISTER HUSSEIN ONN WILL MEET WITH UNION LEADERS SEPT 23 IN AN ATTEMPT TO RESOLVE THE DISPUTE. END SUMMARY.

2. THE CONTROVERSY OVER IMPLEMENTATION OF THE IBRAHIM ALI REPORT (REFTEL A, PARA 5, AND PREVIOUS) CONTINUES TO BE FRONT PAGE NEWS IN MALAYSIA AND IS NOW THE MAJOR SUBJECT OF NEWSPAPER EDITORIALS AND LETTERS TO THE EDITOR. VIRTUALLY EVERY DAY ANOTHER COMPONENT GOVERNMENT SERVICE UNION OF THE CONGRESS OF UNIONS OF EMPLOYEES IN THE PUBLIC AND CIVIL SERVICES (CUEPACS) ANNOUNCES ITS DECISION TO GO ON STRIKE ON OCTOBER 19 IF THE GOVERNMENT

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DOES NOT ANNOUNCE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REPORT. EDITORIAL

OPINION CONTINUES TO FAVOR THE GOM POSITION THAT EARLY IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REPORT IS FISCALLY IMPRACTICAL AND THAT FURTHER REVIEW OF THE REPORT IS NECESSARY. MOST LETTERS TO THE EDITOR ALSO TAKE THE GOVERNMENT SIDE, ALTHOUGH SOME SEE MERIT IN THE UNIONS' STAND. LAST WEEK FOR THE FIRST TIME THE GOVERNMENT-INFLUENCED "NEW STRAITS TIMES" (NST) POINTED OUT IN AN EDITORIAL THAT THE GOVERNMENT, IN THE NAME OF THE KING, IS EMPOWERED BY THE INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS ACT TO EFFECTIVELY FREEZE ALL UNION STRIKE ACTION INVOLVING PUBLIC SERVICE EMPLOYEES. (COMMENT. ALTHOUGH NO GOM SPOKESMAN HAS YET MENTIONED IN PUBLIC THE GOVERNMENT'S POWER TO DECLARE STRIKES BY PUBLIC EMPLOYEES ILLEGAL, THE POINTED REMINDER OF THIS FACT IN TWO SEPARATE NST EDITORIALS CAN BE SEEN AS A THREAT.)

3. ON SEPT 16 "SOURCES" SAID THAT PRIME MINISTER HUSSEIN AND PUBLIC SERVICE UNION LEADERS WOULD MEET ON SEPT 23 "IN ATTEMPT TO BREAK THE IMPASSE OVER THE IBRAHIM ALI REPORT." THIS WILL BE THE SECOND SUCH MEETING ON THE REPORT, THE LAST BEING ON AUG 10 WHEN THE GOM ANNOUNCED IT WOULD MAKE A DECISION ON IMPLEMENTATION IN SIX MONTHS. (SEE REFTEL B.) THIS ANNOUNCEMENT PROMPTED THE UNIONS' DECISION TO STRIKE. COMMENTING ON THE MEETING, CUEPACS SECRETARY GENERAL JAMALUDDIN ISA EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT DATUK HUSSEIN WILL MAKE AN "OFFER" TO THE UNION SIDE. "IF THERE IS NO OFFER, I CANNOT SEE HOW THE IBRAHIM ALI REPORT PROBLEM WILL BE SOLVED." SAID JAMALUDDIN.  
UNDERHILL

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